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held on
Friday, 9 October 1992
at 11.30 a.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

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| Chairman: | Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON | (Uruguay) |
| later: | Miss DIOP (Vice-Chairman) | (Senegal) |

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The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of his Government and of the countries of the European Community, said that he was deeply concerned at the fact that a number of important documents intended for members of the Second Committee, especially the report of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) as well as the reports on debt and on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing and its impact on living marine resources, had still not been published. Such delays in publication were all the more serious as they forced the Committee to postpone its debates on the issues dealt with by the documents in question, and the Twelve were opposed to that practice. Without minimizing the difficulties that the departments involved in documents production faced, the Twelve nevertheless wished to draw the Secretariat's attention to the seriousness of that issue.

2. Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece) supported the statement of the United Kingdom representative with respect to documentation and said that the report of UNITAR in particular should have been ready by 7 October.

3. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) said that it was not the first time that his delegation was speaking on the question of delays in the publication of documents. On several occasions his delegation had called for greater efficiency on the part of the Secretariat in that area. Yet, despite several resolutions on that subject there had been no improvement. He confirmed the request of the five Maghreb countries to postpone the debate on desertification since the report on that issue was not yet available.

4. Mr. OLISEMEKA (Nigeria), supported by Mr. NYAMIKEH (Ghana), said that he had been told that advance copies in English of the UNITAR report were available and wondered whether that version of the document could not be used for the debate on that question.

5. Mr. PAULINICH (Peru) supported the request of the representative of Tunisia to postpone the debate on desertification.

6. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of her own country as well as of the Group of 77, expressed support for the concern of the representative of the United Kingdom and other speakers with respect to delays in the publication of documentation. It was extremely difficult to work under such conditions. In her delegation's opinion, documents should be available at least one week in advance.

7. The CHAIRMAN assured members of the Committee that due account would be taken of their concerns by the Bureau, which was expected to meet soon to consider how the serious problem raised could be resolved.

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (PART I)

(c) NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY (A/47/36, supplement No. 36, A/47/390)

(d) DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENERGY RESOURCES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/47/202-E/1992/51, A/47/390)

(e) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO MITIGATE THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES ON KUWAIT AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION RESULTING FROM THE SITUATION BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT (A/47/265-E/1992/81)

8. Mr. REED (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Public Affairs) recalled, with respect to agenda item 78 (c), the enormous damage that had been caused by the massive oil spill in the Persian Gulf waters and the fact that the last burning oil well had been capped in November 1991. The long-term consequences for human health of the air pollution resulting from the burning oil wells were yet to be fully determined. The marine and coastal environment had also been substantially affected, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where 600 kilometres of coastline had been severely damaged. According to estimates, at least 30,000 marine birds had perished as a result of the pollution. In order to assess the state of the marine environment, a 100-day expedition had been launched by the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME). The results of that expedition, in which th 'ount Mitchell, a United States research vessel, had participated, were under analysis. Naturally, all those activities required funds. However, it had been made abundantly clear at the third special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that rehabilitating the environment in the Persian Gulf region went beyond the financial capabilities of the countries of the region. According to conservative estimates, additional funding of $50 million would be required to implement all the activities called for by the United Nations Inter-agency Plan of Action for the region. He therefore appealed to all the Governments that could do so to contribute generously to the international effort.

9. Miss Diop (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

10. Mrs. PASTIZZI-FERENCIC (Director, Science, Technology, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Division, the Department of Economic and Social Development), speaking on agenda item 78 (d) concerning development of the energy resources of developing countries, said that it emerged from the report of the Secretary-General on that question (A/47/202) that the demand for commercial energy in the developing countries had been growing rapidly, those countries' share of world energy requirements having doubled during the previous two decades, from 13 per cent in 1970 to 26 per cent in 1990. During the previous decade, i.e. from 1980 to 1990, consumption of commercial energy in developing countries had increased by 57.4 per cent, representing an annual growth rate of 4.2 per cent. It was true that many developing countries still

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used non-commercial sources of energy. That was the case, for example, of 70 per cent of sub-Saharan African countries, which used fuelwood. However, the developing countries' consumption of commercial energy was expected to continue to rise, reaching the same level as that of the developed countries by the year 2010. Meanwhile, the developed countries' energy demand would grow more slowly as a result of their conservation efforts, technological advances and shift towards less energy-intensive industries.

11. Naturally, that increase in demand in the developing countries drove up the cost of their energy imports. The estimated cost of the developing countries' cumulative oil imports alone during the 1990s would reach the staggering figure of US$ 500 billion. While oil and gas continued to predominate in world primary energy consumption, coal still played an important role, particularly in a number of developing countries and in the countries with economies in transition. It should be noted that the energy-deficient countries and non-OPEC oil exporting developing countries were currently making significant efforts in the exploration of energy resources. However, given the considerable investments required for such high-risk activities, it was important for both developing countries and countries in transition to take the necessary measures to attract capital.

12. World electricity consumption increased to 11,753 terawatt hours (TWH) in 1990, representing a slower growth rate than in the previous year. In the developing countries, although the overall growth rate of electricity consumption far exceeded that of the developed countries, per capita consumption in those countries remained well below that of the developed countries. According to World Bank estimates, the electricity sector in the developing countries required annual investments of some US$ 125 billion.

13. Bearing in mind the gap between financial needs and available resources, it was clear that the key lay in changing the patterns of energy generation, distribution and consumption. The United Nations stood ready to mobilize the international community to accelerate the exploration and development of energy resources in developing countries, with emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation. The Department of Economic and Social Development was already working towards that end by organizing a series of seminars and projects taking into account not only those two requirements but also the need to assess the impact on the environment of the development of new sources of energy.

14. In its report on its sixth session (A/47/36), the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy noted that, notwithstanding the relatively slow progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action, there had been a revival of interest in new and renewable sources of energy since the latter part of the 1980s, largely as a result of increased environmental concerns. At the Committee's session, the relevance of new and renewable sources of energy had been reaffirmed, as had the need for renewed United Nations support and enhanced inter-agency

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coordination in that field. The Committee had given particular attention to the report of the United Nations Solar Energy Group on Environment and Development entitled "Solar energy: a strategy in support of environment and development" and the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy responsible for assessing the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. Both reports had called for increased resource commitment, strengthening of institutions at all levels and policy innovations. The Committee had also underscored the close relationship between the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy and the objectives of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The programme adopted at that Conference, Agenda 21, would certainly have an important bearing on future activities in the field of new and renewable sources of energy. Lastly, following the Castel Gandolfo Colloquium, held in 1987, a pre-feasibility study on the establishment of an international network of centres of excellence in the field of new and renewable sources of energy had been completed, to be followed by a more comprehensive study for which Italy had already made resources available.

15. In conclusion, she welcomed the decision taken by the General Assembly to establish a new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, which, dealing with both conventional and alternative sources of energy, would be in a better position to respond to the need to promote energy for sustainable development. Finally, she thanked all Governments which had convened or supported important international meetings aimed at promoting international cooperation in the field of energy.

16. Mr. MASOOD (Pakistan) said that, since energy was both an agent and an index of prosperity, the Group of 77 regarded the continuous review of energy-related issues as a matter of the utmost importance. The developing countries' quest for indigenous, abundant, dependable and economical sources of energy continued. Despite the visible increase in the share of the developing countries in world commercial energy consumption, the rate of per capita consumption remained at a very low level in those countries, amounting to 48 kilograms of oil equivalent (as against 4,350 kilograms in the developed market economies), whereas those countries' goals of social and economic development called for higher energy intensities and distinctly higher consumption rates, as was recognized, moreover, by the Framework Convention on Climate Change. In the absence of appropriate and accessible technology and financial resources, developing countries found it difficult to utilize their available resources without concerted action by the international community.

17. In the short run, the energy demands of the developing countries could be met only by utilizing fossil fuels. Over the long term and to meet increased demand, those countries would have to consider developing their new and renewable sources of energy. In either case the investments required were substantial, and unless an immediate and earnest effort was made at the regional, national and international levels there might be a new energy crisis of severe magnitude.

(Mr. Masood, Pakistan)

18. As the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy had again noted, at its sixth session, held in February 1992, the sources of energy supply needed to be diversified. The Committee had reaffirmed the fundamental objectives of the Nairobi Programme of Action, including the need for an orderly transition from a world economy based on hydrocarbons to one based increasingly on new and renewable sources of energy in a manner which was consistent with the needs and options of individual countries, socially equitable, economically and technically viable and environmentally sustainable. Unfortunately, very little progress had been made in that direction, due to the international community's waning interest in the Programme of Action. There was also a danger that the international community, faced with new priorities such as the environment, might go back on the decisions it had taken 10 years earlier.

19. Diversification of energy sources in the developing countries required the establishment of an appropriate framework for the transfer of technology, in particular environmentally sound technologies. Although the United Nations system, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular, was capable of playing an important role in facilitating that transfer, efforts in that area had been sporadic. Moreover, financing of new and renewable sources of energy programmes had declined considerably in recent years. Consequently, renewed effort in that direction was needed, emphasizing in particular the action programmes undertaken in that area by developing countries. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies should be effected on concessional and preferential terms.

20. The Group of 77 would like the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development to become operational as soon as possible so that the issue of energy, which was so important, could remain high on the agenda of the United Nations.

21. Mr. CLARKE (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, recalled that his delegation had already made a full statement on agenda items 78 (c) and (d) of the agenda in the Economic and Social Council. The text of that statement was available to all delegations.

22. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself fully with the statement made by the spokesman for the Group of 77, who had presented the Group's position with conviction. Ten years earlier, the international community had adopted the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. Following the recommendations made at the Conference on that question, held in Nairobi in August 1981, the General Assembly had adopted, in resolution 36/193, a set of measures relating to the 10 promising sources of new and renewable energy and had agreed on priority areas for action, including the mobilization of the financial resources necessary to implement the Programme. It must be acknowledged that the objectives had not been achieved thus far. In fact,

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whereas at the time the Programme was adopted, in August 1981, approximately 15 per cent of world energy demands had been met by the new and renewable sector, currently that percentage had dropped to 13 per cent.

23. The UNDP Energy Account, the target for which had been set at 100 million dollars at the time of the Conference, had reached a little over 40 million dollars; since 1988 no further contributions had been made to that account. In addition, the United Nations Trust Fund for New and Renewable Sources of Energy was exhausted, reflecting the international community's loss of interest in the Programme of Action.

24. In discussing that critical situation in its final report (A/AC.218/1992/5/Rev.1), the United Nations Solar Energy Group on Environment and Development, which had met in Oslo in October 1990, had recognized that the decade following the adoption of the Nairobi Programme of Action had essentially been a lost decade, since the political will expressed in the Programme had not been followed by the necessary financial commitments and institutional support. A similar admission of failure had been made at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, held in New York in August 1991.

25. Thus, the utilization of new and renewable sources of energy, which in certain developing countries accounted for 60 to 70 per cent of the overall supply in both urban and rural zones, was currently hindered by a lack of financial resources and appropriate technologies. Thus, there was a vital need for international action to promote the transfer of the necessary technologies to developing countries, on preferential terms, so as to accelerate the development and utilization of those sources of energy. Strengthening of national capacities should be a priority for the United Nations system.

26. His delegation welcomed the proposal of the Colloquium of High-level Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, held at Castel Gandolfo, concerning the establishment of an international network of centres of excellence in that field, and the measures already taken by the Natural Resources and Energy Division and by the Special Coordinator for New and Renewable Sources of Energy, designed to renew the efforts to establish that network.

27. Although it possessed hydrocarbon deposits, Algeria had, during the past decade, turned its attention to promoting and developing other forms of energy, in particular solar energy. It had set up, inter alia, a centre for the development of energy systems, a centre for research and development on renewable sources of energy, an experimental solar equipment station, and several units for the production of silicon and photovoltaic systems. At the same time, it had enacted legislation promoting the hydrocarbon sector, with a view to encouraging foreign companies to increase their participation in the exploitation of oil deposits.

(Mr. Ahmia, Algeria)

28. His delegation hoped that the necessary steps would be taken to enable the future Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Devolopment to meet as planned and that the Committee's programme of work would give full consideration to the needs and priorities of the developing countries.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.